



SWAP NEWS

Montana Source Water Assessment Program Update

Montana Source Water Protection Program Approved by EPA

U.S. EPA officially approved the Montana Source Water Protection Program in November 1999. The majority of EPA's review comments requested clarification and expanded detail in the areas of delineation and inventory methods. The most significant change made to the program in response to EPA comments involved delineation of source water protection areas for groundwater systems near surface water bodies. The change adds a surface water buffer to the source water protection areas for ground water sources that draw water from surface waters. EPA also was concerned that our program be consistent with provisions of the Ground Water Rule that is expected to go into effect in 2003. We added greater detail on the types of significant potential sources of pathogenic organisms such as bacteria and viruses that will be identified in contaminant inventories. In all, DEQ feels that the changes made at the request of EPA only strengthened the program further.

The huge task of implementing the Montana Source Water Protection Program looms on the horizon now that we have EPA approval. The Safe Drinking Water Act allows DEQ until approximately May 2003 to complete source water delineation and assessments of all public water supplies in the State. In order to meet this deadline, we have developed a strategy intended to use available resources efficiently. A key element of this strategy is a grant program designed to provide money to public water systems that wish to do the necessary work themselves or through a party of their choice. Information regarding qualifications and the application process is available from the Source Water Protection Section at DEQ by calling 406 444-6697 or going to their website at <http://www.deq.state.mt.us/ppa/>. Public water supplies are encouraged to look into this grant opportunity and to locally develop their own source water delineation and assessment reports.

SWAP Advisory Council Completes Their Mission

DEQ would like to publicly thank the following members of the Source Water Protection Advisory Council for the time and effort they contributed to help us develop the Source Water Protection Program.

Mike Cobb, Rancher
Jack Stultz, Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation
Deb Madison, Fort Peck Tribes
Doug Parker, ASARCO
Don Skaar, Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Roger Noble, Land & Water Consulting
Joe Steiner, HDR Engineering
Bob Willems, Montana Assoc. of Conservation Districts

Bill O'Connell, Montana Rural Water Systems, Inc.
Richard Parks, Fishing Outfitters Assoc. of Montana
George Algard, Montana Dept. of Agriculture
Shelly Nolan, City of Havre
Starr Sullivan, City of Missoula
Roger DeBruyker, Former State Representative
Marvin Miller, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology
Denise Deluca, Land & Water Consulting

Special Recognition to Gary Root

Over the past couple years Gary Root has been quietly working away at developing a source water protection plan for Columbia Falls. His approach truly embodies the spirit in which congress intended the Source Water Protection Program to be implemented. Columbia Falls had some early assistance from DEQ but Gary has made source water protection a local effort by the public water supply.

Gary has spent considerable time identifying potential contaminant sources within the Columbia Falls source water protection area. He has located potential contaminant sources on a large city plat map and linked these locations to inventory sheets. Gary's continues to be involved in the process of developing a source water protection plan, ensuring that the information will be used to protect the high quality water Columbia Falls enjoys.

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Flathead County Considers Local Water Quality District.

The Flathead county health department has begun the process of developing a local water quality district. A local advisory committee has been formed and initial organizational planning has started. Funding for the feasibility assessment has been derived from existing county budgets.

The next steps include an extensive effort to educate the community about the costs and benefits of a local water quality district to ensure local understanding and support. DEQ encourages public water systems in Flathead County to become informed about local water quality districts. Watch the community pages in the local newspaper for information about meeting dates and topics.

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Status of Delineation and Assessment Reports and Source Water Protection Plans

With EPA approval of the Montana Source Water Protection Program this column will be the place to

monitor how DEQ is fulfilling its mandate to complete source water assessment plans for all public water systems in the state.

Delineation and assessment reports for the towns of Havre and Chinook, Sage Creek Hutterite Colony north of Chester, and McHugh's Mobile Home Park in Helena were completed in the past quarter. Sage Creek Hutterite Colony also is commended for completing the additional step of developing and implementing a source water protection plan.

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Tech Tips

Our tech tip is for the Internet users out there. Check out the following URLs. The first site provides a good primer on source water assessment and protection. The second URL connects you to a site at the Montana State Library where you can view topographic maps of specific locations by typing in a site name. Just toggle down to the name search box and enter the name of you hometown or your favorite fishing stream. This site is used by DEQ to locate public water supplies and is helpful in mapping source water protection areas. The other sites listed below do not deal with source water protection directly but are good sites to check out. They are the Montana Rivers Information System and the USGS National Atlas.

<http://www.epa.gov/ogwdw/test/protect/index.html>

<http://nris.state.mt.us/topofinder.html>

<http://nris.state.mt.us/wis/wis1.html>

<http://www.usgs.gov/atlas/>

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